

Rockdale Dam

The Rockdale Dam was located on Koshkonong Creek in the small village of Rockdale in southeast Dane County. The millpond was filled with sediment leaving only a foot of water depth through most of pond. It was carp-dominated, had a thermal impact on the stream in the summer and prevented fish passage.

The dam was in disrepair and after much discussion, the owner decided to remove the dam and asked for the department's assistance. The department partnered with numerous agencies and groups to fund the dam's removal and the site restoration including Dane County, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Friends of Cam-Rock Park and others.

The dam was breached in September 2000 and the impoundment area was seeded with a mix of a fast growing temporary cover and native grasses including Big Blue Stem, Switchgrass, Redtop and rice cutgrass. Over the winter and spring, the impoundment dewatered and the vegetation established. In June 2001, the remaining dam structure was removed. Additional seeding was done.

There were three phases of channel restoration. The lower impoundment channel banks were regraded to provide an annual floodplain and to stabilize the banks. The channel's head cut stalled and we had to mechanically cut the channel sediments to continue to establish the new channel. Staff and neighbors probed the millpond sediments and located the original channel. The third phase include reestablishing the upper channel in the lower pool into the 'narrows'. All together approximately 9,800 feet of channel was reestablished upstream of the dam site through the former millpond.

By removing the dam and restoring the channel, the thermal impact and the fish barrier were eliminated. Anecdotal information from area anglers indicated that the carp dominance no longer exists and sportfish populate the area. Fisheries surveys are planned for this year to confirm this information. Wetland diversity was enhanced benefiting waterfowl, amphibians and reptiles. County staff and friends groups have continued to remove invasive species and to improve the habitat.

Dane County has purchased or owns almost all of the former impoundment as an addition to an adjacent Cam-Rock County Park. Additionally, the county purchased development rights to the view-scape so the character of the area will remain. The county's master planning calls for 2 or three bridges, trail expansion, establishment of a canoe trail and additional habitat restoration.

Rockdale Millpond Restoration



Southern view of lower historic millpond area.
Note: wetland species and habitat diversity.
Wetland species diversity will benefit waterfowl, amphibians and reptiles.



Northern view of restored spring channel.
Potential spawning and nursery habitat for northern pike.



Shallow, warm-water carp habitat and thermal impacts eliminated.



Restored riverine channel through historic millpond allowing fish migration to upper reaches of Koshkonong Creek